

VILA RECÔNCAVO

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128 *Although Vila Recôncavo is a real town, the names of all persons and places have been changed for the purposes of this study.

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constantly growing, or at least changing. New members are added, people who have made their mark on the society and who, although they have less family tradition behind them, are on the whole acceptable to the elite. 565*

Locally the upper-class members are addressed by the formal term o senhor and a senhora, at times by meu patrão or meu branco (my white), frequently by title name, such as "Dr. Louis," and in some cases by the traditional intimate term of yoyô (for a man) and yayá (for a woman). At times even the very formal, older term of Vossa Excelência (Your Excellency) is used. Yoyô is an old term formerly used by some slaves toward their masters, and although it is generally restricted to white people, there are occasions when a member of a mulatto family is known to his intimates as yoyô. With rare exceptions, members of the upper class address all those below them simply as você, and usually use the imperative form of the verb in giving directions. These two linguistic devices tend to strengthen and maintain the differences between these groups of people. 565* 576

Relations between members of Class A and those below are simple. As has already been stated, the landowners avoid the town of Vila Recôncavo, and it is seldom that Class B town people are invited to a social gathering at a plantation or at the factory, so that these two classes are rarely in social contact. Since the rural Class B consists mainly of overseers and other employees of Class A, relationships between them are those of employee and employer. However, when a planter celebrates a special occasion such as a birthday, the overseers are invited, and may "drop in" as a matter of form or courtesy; they escape as soon as possible, for they are rarely included in the brincadeiras (plays, or jokes) of the owners and their guests. For the most part the overseers and others of their class come alone, without their wives and families. This is an important indication of class position, for as a rule the wife of an overseer feels embarrassed in the company of gente (people) and refuses to go even when specially invited. The very strong em família pattern, combined with the intimacy of the large families, makes it extremely difficult for a lower-class person to feel any sort of equality at such a gathering. [82] 565* 571

During the course of field work the author was given a party, a Reis, a kind of surprise party which takes place during the period following the sixth of January, the Day of Kings. [466] 565* 574 123 • 571

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A group of people decide to "take a party of kings" to someone's house. They wait until the lights in the house go out late at night and then knock on the door, playing and singing a song which is traditional for the purpose. The owner must then open the house and let everyone in to dance and make merry. The surprise element has been removed, for it is now considered courteous to sound out the householder to see whether he would like to be the recipient of such a party, and also to give him time to prepare food and drink. The householder also has the privilege of inviting anyone he wants who might be overlooked by those who organize the party. A group of young men approached the author in the prescribed manner, and in due course all arrangements were completed. The young men were to supply an electric phonograph and records for the dancing, and the author was requested to invite the rural planters, especially those with daughters.

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A group of twenty-four planters and about a hundred townspeople, factory technicians, overseers, and a few men of urban Class C came to the party. The planters arrived in a truck a little early and entered the house, which was then closed and the lights turned off. Shortly afterwards the others arrived at the door and knocked, and the band began to play the long serenade. (A band was brought along for the song, which is an important part of the Reis; but nowadays no one likes to dance to a hometown band when records are available, so the men played only the serenade and then put their instruments away.) At the end of the song, the doors and windows were opened and the guests began to pour in.

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The rooms of the house were small, but all the furniture had been removed to make room for dancing in the two largest rooms, which were joined by two wide doors. At the beginning of the party everyone was very formal and shy; the young men remained on one side of the room, the young women on the other, and the entire planter group in a huddle by itself. Gradually things got under way, and as drinks were served to esquentar a gente (warm up the people) as many as could dance in the cramped quarters did so. For the first hour or so all the guests mingled, dancing with one another; then gradually the members of Class A began to pull away, at first beginning to dance among themselves and finally usurping a third room in which they danced away from the others, uninterrupted by anyone.

Reactions to this were varied in the days after the party

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when the affair was discussed. The young men were rather disappointed by the withdrawal of the upper-class girls, for they had looked forward to dancing with them with great expectations. Their disappointment, however, was expressed by saying, "We dance differently, and since it was the first time together there wasn't time to get used to each others' style." Some of the older men simply asked, "What did you expect? You know they don't mix with us." The planters, on the other hand, enjoyed the party but were embarrassed by the fact that they had created a separate group and ended up by saying that "the only kind of good party is a family party, which it was for us."

This party was by no means typical, for the very existence of such an affair was due to the presence of a stranger in the town who was able to bring together the different elements. Under other conditions it would not have taken place. Under the novel conditions, each group after completing the formalities withdrew to itself, enjoying the party and creating no embarrassing moments for the host. Reflection on what had happened pointed out to everyone the distance between the two groups, but there was no bitterness or resentment shown by anyone. It passed as an incident, and afterwards people discussed only the part of the party they had enjoyed, ignoring the rest.

Class A members participate in a broader schedule of activities in Salvador, where not only planters, but also professional, commercial, and industrial people mix. The children of Class A go to private schools, belong to the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts (organizations which have not as yet penetrated the rural zone) and to social clubs for sports and dancing. Their parents participate in a round of social activities including the theater, lectures, dances, and anniversaries. Birthdays are usually important celebrations, when as many members of the extended family as possible gather. For special occasions, such as a wedding in other parts of the family, they may go to Rio de Janeiro; at other times they go there simply for a vacation or on a shopping tour. Those who own plantations usually spend only the summer harvest season in the country. It is vacation time for the children, and they invite relatives and friends to spend some time with them swimming, fishing, hunting, and horseback riding. The entire area is their playground. Their parents participate in these activities as much as possible after their official duties of plan-

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THE CANDOMBLE

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all of whom represent the African tradition in its "purest" form—is, throughout the fetish world, very great."

two thousand persons were present, including members of the Irmandade of Rosario Church, dressed in their robes. The coffin, which was, in keeping with Anninha's request, quite modest, had over it the robe she had worn as a member of this Irmandade of which she was so proud, and was carried on the shoulders of the Brothers of Nossa Senhora do Rosario and of São Benedicto. The crowd of mourners blocked traffic in Rua Dr. Seabra for more than half an hour. Some *filhas de santo* wept unceasingly. Others related the virtues of the kind Anninha.

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"When the coffin, carried by pious hands, entered the large gate of the cemetery, the *atabaques* broke out into African rhythms, while sad voices rose in the African songs of the *seita* to which the illustrious *mãe de santo* belonged.

"In the chapel of the cemetery, Canon Assis Curvello repeated the *exortação*, and her body was laid away in a recently opened crypt.

"Then several orators spoke, among them Snr. Alvaro MacDowell de Oliveira in the name of the União das Seitas Afro-Brasileiras da Bahia, the journalist Edison Carneiro, and representatives of the Centro Cruz Santa do Aché de Okô Afonjá and of the Irmandade of Rosario Church. When the ceremony was over, two omnibuses carried a large number of the friends of Anninha to São Gonçalo do Retiro, where they took part in the preparatory ritual for the African funeral ceremony of Axé, to be held seven days after the death of the beloved leader of the *terreiro* of Aché de Okô Afonjá. This ceremony will consist of rites for the eternal peace of the dead *mãe de santo* and will be participated in by *ogans*, *filhas de santo*, *paes de santo*, and other friends of the deceased."

"This chapter is primarily based upon the author's personal experience as a visitor at numerous ceremonies in eighteen *seitas* at Bahia and as a participant over a period of several months as an *ogan* in the *candomblé* of Pae Procópio in Matatú. For further information see, in addition to the works of Nina Rodrigues, Arthur Ramos, Manoel Querino, and Edison Carneiro previously cited: Padre Etienne Ignace Brasil, "Le Fetichisme des negres du Brésil," *Anthropos*, III (1908), 881-904; Gonçalves Fernandes, *Xangô do Nordeste* (Rio, 1937) and *O folclore mágico do Nordeste* (Rio, 1938); João Varella, *Corne e Damão* (Bahia, 1938); the novels *O feiticeiro* by Xavier Marques (Bahia, 1932) and *Inbladd* by Jorge Amado (Rio, 1935); and newspaper accounts such as "Credo o conselho africano da Bahia," *Estado da Bahia*, August 4, 1937, and "No mundo cheio de mysterios dos espiritos e 'paes de santo,'" *ibid.*, May 24, 1936.

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[SALVADOR]

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829 he was a mulatto. His own mother called his attention to the
*563 difference that existed between him and his friends, but those
565 who were of his type and who had money continued to regard
themselves as Whites and to be treated as such. An economist,
darker than the official we have just quoted, states that the ex-
treme poverty in which he lived during his childhood did not per-
mit him to think of his color. An intellectual of a dark color
says that when he was an adolescent he never thought of his type;
no experiences previous to this period were associated with an
[572] awareness of his color. The same thing seems to happen among
white children when lasting relationships are allowed to be estab-
lished between them and their companions at school and play,
without discrimination as to type. Numerous informants of very
dark color report that they still maintain several friendships made
at school with finos Whites. Even among the adults there are some
who claim not to have ever been conscious of their type. An
[115] instructor told us that he was never preoccupied with his pigmen-
tation, because he regarded that as having nothing to do with his
difficulties or with his professional life. It is clear that statements
of this nature cannot be accepted solely at their face value; they
[124] could, as a matter of fact, be defense reactions against the in-
[123] quiries of the investigators.

*563 There are nevertheless persons who do not succeed in over-
829 coming the inferiority complex resulting from their "quality."
571 "A look is enough to upset a person of dark color," said a /31/
very black university student. Sometimes when he had been
treated as a "Negro" he was irritated and felt humiliated. "But
I have succeeded in overcoming this feeling," he adds; "I too
am able to treat other "Whites" without antipathy as soon as I see
that they are prepared to be pleasant with me." Without doubt
there exists "a slight repression" among the Blacks, "but it is
never intense and ought to be overcome," states a mulatto lawyer,
and he adds that "such a feeling can give birth to a servile atti-
tude"; one of his colleagues, of the same color as he, a very
competent and industrious man, does not have the courage to
plead cases for himself and continues to be simply the assistant
of a white lawyer.